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EXTRACTS

FROM

THE DIARY OF AN ARTIST.

By Jack Upper.

February 16th, 1841.—Tuesday.—Rose early this morning, and moved some crocuses into knots. Why have we all this purple and yellow, when everything else is black? The use—of what use is this harmony? Does aught exist for beauty only? perhaps beauty and use are indivisible, and cabbages, potatoes, and cattle-feeding grass are inferior ministering vegetables, keeping alive intelligent animals with eyes that feed on color, so that flowers and all may be eaten? Is the grass or the cabbage less beautiful than the crocus? a cabbage is beautiful: how do we know it is less beautiful? Let me see. If we say the one administers to the mind and body; the other to the mind only, does that prove anything? only if we adopt the fundamental definition, that whatever *most* addresses the mind is most beautiful, and granting into the bargain, that the cabbage, having exhausted some of its function upon the body, has less left for the mind than the crocus has: and this last is not easily proved, even if the definition adopted be true.—Is it true? I can argue about these things with another better than I can write about them by myself: must speak to Galt on the matter, and hear what he thinks of an Art Debating Society. * * * Made another sketch for "Burns," and getting on with my "Clapping Faun" the second. The Earl of Cardigan acquitted, and sufficiently abused by the papers—these critics! My crocuses will flower in spite of them, and their "utter disapproval of the color:" this of vegetables, well;—but they might make some allowance for the natures of men.

Feb. 22d.—Monday.—Obliged to leave the Academy this morning, the day being wholly dark. The lamps lighted, and streets looking sepulchral. Left several students in the school, clattering their boards upon the rail, and whistling, reminding one much of a crowd at the theatre, who won't hear anything but their own noise, while they hoot for something they think they have a right to. Wandered about the squares and parks, where the people were enjoying a sort of meteorological holiday, aiming jokes at the weather, or doing grotesque greetings. There is something artistic and poetical about a day like this: a dramatist might make much of it in a play, I think, gaining thereby a remote point of view, as it were, to view man from, as the gods, perhaps, view him fumbling in his own atmosphere—a part of him and his doings. Any change in the medium wherein we live,—two or three orange clouds lying out on the winter sky,—a steady, brooding rain in hot summer, with the reflex of trees on the roof;—these things work the same result, make us look at man as a *race*, and unroll the world in visible novelty. * * * A peculiarly unreal, secret day till the evening, when I left Pamphillon's, after reading Johnson's *Life of Prior*, and returned to the Academy: the gaslight as usual. Felt inclined for company going home, and went round to the city for my brother, who had left; so I had to walk home alone; not quite though:

at Kennington Lane there was a child crying round the gas-lamps, miserably lost, and, by some wicked run of chances, no *real humanity* taking notice of him, though much shain humanity was passing. Nothing to be got from him but sobs, and nothing from the most apparent denizens but, "don't know, I'm sure, sir." A girl of thirteen took one hand, I the other; we went into shops, inquired, and restored finally the stray. (Note first)—the dam gave it a maternal thrashing. (Note second)—the girl who aided in the restoration thanked me, though, on inquiry, she was no wise connected with the child: why did she thank me? Why did I offer her sixpence? No question, I suppose, why she refused it. A question why she colored—I was in "gude braid claithe," she was in cotton: we might have taken hands on the occasion, she thought. She was a lovely, indignant creature, and I shall not see her again.

Sunday, Feb. 28th.—Fine day. Went to Galt's lodging. Debating Society in course of erection, designed for the poetico-philosophical consideration of subjects in Art or Science, not immediately practical. Settle that it shall be called the "Abstract Society." Know of artists, doctors, and lawyers who will join us: the meetings to take place fortnightly at the respective houses of the members. Much surely to be gained by an inter-communication of this kind, if it only be sincere: I foresee, however, an obstacle. The non-artists will "read up" Art for the occasion; and so think, and speak in the fetter of Virnosi and connoisseurs: this can't be helped; a moiety shall utter human opinion: Galt, for one, will, which is something. Why did Chesterfield make it ungentlemanly to talk about one's profession? we know most about it, and our hearers least; it is the most profitable, the most interesting subject we can choose: why else do we try to "draw out" professionals? and why are professionals dumb and inscrutable upon these occasions, but because we encounter them with professional technicalities and slang? A man questions me on *middle-distance, first and second harmonies*, and *satellites*, and I see he knows all about the matter, or thinks he does;—know? he may know more than I! "So much red, so much yellow, so much blue;" are those the legitimate proportions? take your scales, then—don't ask me—and see if the picture is full weight. Here is Dr. Johnson (the crabbed?) talking to a simpleton, and ignoring the sagacity of the savant. Why the Doctor won't talk to people so much ahead of him.

News of the "Governor Fenner" having sunk off Holyhead, when a hundred and twenty-two lives were lost in five minutes. And one labors a life-long to paint the waves, that wash out in a minute, a score of lives! Then the mind, incapable at first of apprehending the horrible, grand beauty of the sea, tutored by degrees to apprehend it; to gaze in transport at ghastly rocks and thunder-hatching clouds;—then the mind's own nerves, all tempered so delicately fine, with so much for these nerves to do, so many proud products of other fine nerves, which only these can appreciate;—not, surely ruthlessly crashed? these nerves slammed upon rocks? No; some illusion here, something to be studied—

looked into. These breakers, and their mountain-leaps, are dictated to by gentle powers of warmth and secret chemistry, electric, tender pulses instigate the air, the waves bound up with hungry, passionate rapture; for all the barking discord has a law, as much as music, to the hiss of the unsatisfied wave.—Shall we learn from these, sea-shattered, when we meet them in some world, that their darling nerves are with them, that the rocks were gentle—that they died in the arms of their friends?—the escaped ones say but hard things of the amiable sea!

Art! Beauty! Poetry! What do you mean? Why here? Are you sane? Is it well that this same poetry gets hold, then, of the frame before paralysis and rheumatism take it? Do rheumatics, paralytics, and men given to die, prepare themselves for these ends with poetry? Take numerous wheels and springs, and spindles, graduate and adapt them; let centre question centre; let circumferences reply; co-ordinate their motions with the motions of two hands hung slightly, of delicatest make; and when these hands move round the configured dial, which the air is not soft enough to touch, lay over the clear glass like an eye; so, steady, lest you jar it, hold it on your hand; so turn it—and then grind it on rock.

March 1st, 1841.—Horror—Art is horror—the cruellest blessing under heaven!

March 7th.—Sunday.—Sermon against trifling; text from Mathew, 12th chapter 36th verse—"But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof on the day of judgment." Art's condemnation for me. How for a vocation now? What shall I do? for my Lord taketh away from me the stewardship: I cannot dig; to beg I am ashamed. The moon is at the full; the shining hollies hold a mystery of lights, the crocus is ghostly yellow—beauty will live, though art die.

March 9th.—Tuesday.—The weather is very fair, and I am wandering for an object.

10th. Wednesday.—Nothing to-day.

11th.—Put away design for "Burns"—think of putting away Art altogether—the sky is lovely to-night.

12th.—Friday.—Woke early. Walked by moonlight to the Addington hills. I saw them rise up very round, and silver-black with shining heath, with white streams of sand, washed out by rain, lying upon them here and there in the moonshine. Scanty trees on the right, such as grow by the seaside, showed that it was winter by their want of leaves, though it might have been summer on the hills, clothed abundantly with heath, moss, and lichen. Your foot strikes out the lichen as you walk; it flies up a ghostly white, breaks if you tread on it, with a crisp, dry whisper, and, looked at close, is a forest of white frost-trees—the veritable dry bones of vegetation. I climbed some of these hills, and found black chasins in them, where the moonlight could not penetrate, but some misty lines and flashes, getting through gullies which seemed to run down to the bottom, held bars and rods of light over it. * * * Walked about, till sunrise, from one hill to another; the sunrise, the grandest of the grand! for all up the

hills the softest, greenest mosses looked from under the seaweed—like lichens: this spirit-world fabric of white, ghostly lichen, in the phantom-image of trees, comes out on thin legs dancing over the moss-tufts, which are round, soft, the greenest, most vital of growths:—so the sun rose up, touching these, one by one, with a wand of ob-servant gold:—touching life and death together:—one by one, down the hills, each gorse-bush took the light; lastly, the bare, ramping trees. Not a bird spoke; it was more silent than night as the sun came staring up, and the grand machinery of the sky rolled away. * * * I sat down on the head of a hill, and thought all this beauty must be wholesome and admirable for man: surely to keep it on canvas were not trifling, nor a vain thing to hold it in a verse! How many shall see it? but a few; perhaps I am alone on these hills: how many of them that see shall understand? for there came into my mind how, one morning like this, I was out with my brother at sunrise, and we heard one man (a journeyman from the city) say to another, when he saw we were stopping to look at it—"a handsome sight that!" with about as much emotion as if it were a gas-star or a rocket. No, few would apprehend this beauty: but what if I apprehend it too much? find so much beauty here, that death, disease, and accident become a horrible discord? Yes, Art was condemned. "My stewardship was taken away," and I took out my Bible, thinking to turn to this passage, but read where it chanced to open:—"But ye, O mountains of Israel, ye shall shoot forth your branches, and yield your fruit to my people of Israel; for they are at hand to come. For behold, I am for you, and I will turn unto you, and ye shall be tilled and sown. * * * For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you unto your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." Might this be true of Art, I thought, which is the interpretation of nature? Could Israel be washed so clean, and Art remain so filthy? and I read on further, for the lichen at my side had already suggested the "dry bones" of the prophet now opposite the page where I had opened. "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the Spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones. And caused me to pass by them round about: and behold, there were very many in the open valley; and they were very dry. And He said unto me, Son of Man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God thou knowest. Again He said unto me, prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus saith the Lord God unto these bones, Behold I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live; and ye shall know that I am the

Lord." * * * * * And I will prophesy that Art shall live unto the Lord. * * * Walked home over the hills by Croydon; saw many specimens of the evergreen Polypode, Blechnum boreale, and Felix mas; but as for disturbance of the soil, nothing appears to have been moved since its creation-day.

March 13th.—Saturday.—Began the Antinous at the R. A. Lady Montague over-praises this statue: it is graceful, but wanting in intention, and turgid in execution. The students worship it. Are artists all idolaters?

March 16th.—Tuesday.—Bexley called for me at the R. A., to accompany him home to tea: tolerably deep in Greek, spite of his clerkship at the Customs: mad about Tennyson; prefers Ænone to Homer and Virgil. Came home by Vauxhall Bridge, which was almost choked by reason of crowd assembled to see the fire: Southampton Railway Station, at Nine Elms, burned—the fate of all theatres and railway stations; but the destruction of a few such buildings in the neighborhood will pay for building of this Vauxhall Bridge—the toll-man could hardly take the money. Pleasant evening. Bexley backs up the idea of mine, that the painters before Raffaëlle's time were better, i. e. more Christian, than Raffaëlle himself; and that he introduced the heathen element into modern Art.

22d.—Monday.—Getting on to a finish with Antinous. Academy will soon close. I shall finish my figure some day this week—the sooner the better, and not care to finish the session. Showery—hail.

April 1st, 1841.—Heard "Keolanthe" at the English Opera.

14th.—Wednesday.—Saw the Oxford and Cambridge match—Cantabs won. River full of boats and bullies.

17th April.—Saturday.—Galt recovers from measles.

May 1st, 1841.—Saturday.—First meeting of the Abstract Society, and held here. Papers to be read monthly, and the subject discussed, if so required by the majority of the members. Galt reads the address, which I like: "the shortest 'Introductory' ever given," he says.

"Copy of the Inaugural Address read by R. Galt, Esq., to the members of the Abstract Society. A. D. 1841.

"Gentlemen: Though all of us are generally informed of the object of this society, it is right, by a closer defining, and better understanding of that object, that you be enabled to economize your otherwise valuable labor, urging it duly in the one course to the one end, which it will be my business, by your favorable indulgence, to consider with reference not only to the means and appliances necessary to attain it, but likewise to the *cui bono*—the ultimate profit of the end when attained.

"In the first place, then, let us be sure that the end is worthy, before we consider of the means.

"There is, gentlemen, a motive power governing the lower animals, which they obey, but know not of;—their Instinct. We also have an instinct, but we know of it. Thus then, knowing of it, we can oppose it, or strengthen it: let us remember this. You (of my profession) draw teeth, cure diseases in virtue of an *instinctive* pleasure found in doing these things: you

do not do them, or continue to do them, for the sake of *humanity* or *duty*. You may, in the first instance, have *chosen* such vocation from such motive; but you do not—can not—continue its exercise, through trial and difficulty, from sense of duty, or benevolence, or any primal resolution whatever. It were, indeed, putting ourselves too much in the place of the Disposer of things, to attempt to work by any such motive. To return, now to the choice of vocations, it would be difficult to imagine a man grounding it on the instigation of benevolence unless he be naturally, inherently good, which is just an assumption of Godhead at the outset; and if he be a believer in the written law, and studying good will towards men, it would be difficult to imagine him arriving at a conclusion as to what vocation would best serve humanity. No,—solution is here, his *instincts*; the pleasure he takes in doing this or that, and the reasonable hope of success on that ground. Now let us consider this pleasure—this instinct: it is unique, final, efficient for its purpose, a stimulus; makes us do our work as it makes the pigeon fly homeward; fulfills the law of the world, but does not satisfy humanity. One thing more is necessary to all men: they must recognize in the process of the instinct-governed act some law, some principle, some reason, some analogy. You take out a tooth, and find the *external* damage repaired by an *internal* deposit of dentine, but the socket, you know, will be filled by absorption of the jaw itself. You detect then a repairing effort in both cases, but of diverse origin; and the *principle* satisfies you more than the drawing of the tooth. But not the pleasure of this *principle* would sustain you at your *calling*, for you would turn botanist, and detect the same *principle* in the tree.

"Another has no hand to draw teeth with, but has a tongue to speak with, a hand to second it, and a combative logic; these make him plead at the Bar—hold him to that particular calling: but where is his *human*, his *rational* satisfaction? Not in *working* these engines; that is, his animal appetite, the pleasure of yawning, of the pigeon flying home;—not in acquitting his client, for he may know him to be a rogue, though guiltless in this case, and one who has escaped deserved punishment; neither in professional rivalry, which may support him before men, but scarce gain his silent approval: it is not in these that his *real* *human* satisfaction is found, but rather in some interesting feature in the case, analogous, in principle, though different, in fact, to something already in the Books: or it may be in perceiving how his plea might have been met, or in the conviction that he would have made the same exertions for the guilty on the *principle* of *occasional*, *particular* evil consisting with *general* *average* good; and in recognizing the analogy of this *principle* with, perhaps, some principle of state,—the limiting of kingly prerogative, though the king be never so popular,—though this, so far from holding him to his calling, might make him a meteorologist, and exult in the *general* *advantage* of *occasional* *blights* and *thunderstorms*.

"How is it now with the artist? There was a reason why a cloud crossed the sun; why a crow was alone on the hill, and

why Beethoven's symphony in O minor was busy in his head whilst he painted. Not in the laying on of color, and the transfer of nature to canvas, was the *human rational* delight: the instinct played *pleasure* in the nerve-strings, working mysteriously wise, to an unseen end; this was the *motive* force, but the picture was the *type* of the *mood*, a diagram of *hope* or *trouble*; a translation of *music* or of *poetry*; and in recognizing this was the *human rational* delight:—though pleasure of this kind, were it not for the dominant instinct, would tend no more to painting than to natural philosophy, observe. And look now that all arts, scientific and poetic, rooted in plutonic instinct yet culminate on this mental meridian: there is a common ending to all art, all science;—thought. Physician may not understand poet or painter in any of his progressive stages toward this end; but this end reached, they are at one; and poet or painter may not understand physician, lawyer and man of science, until they likewise have arrived at this result—the *common human brotherhood of mind*, the *mental abstract*, so to speak, of *particular instincts*. And in this abstract field of common human sympathies, does the Abstract Society design that its members intercommunicate. You, Lawyer, take care that your experiences have reached this point, ere you give them to the brotherhood—you, Doctor, Artist, Poet, have similar care! The gain is not merely abstract and philosophic, but technical besides; for as the *work* a man does influences and modifies his abstract cogitation, so his abstract cogitation reflects back upon his work: and though it were a vain conceit that you read up, and tried to artistically your thinkings for the benefit of the artist in his own province, where he will ever be before you, yet the genuine offspring of your own unartistic calling, a mental result and a mental irritant, may help him beyond human telling; and the artist too may help you on these terms, as the poet, Goethe, helped us anatomists. See now (close) the *circulation* of thought;—wandering about the woods in summer, I hum out my sonnets on bees and birds; this is because I am a poet, so I sing forth my pleasure, which presently exhales itself: afterwards comes thought. I have enjoyed—dreamed mysteriously by daylight—so I tell my chum, the painter, how I looked at the green trees till my eyes grew giddy, and the grey path looked like red. "Ha!" thinks painter, "thank you there—pink paths were an acquisition!" Painter opens his eyes more wide; he thought he *fancied* before, but pink they are, and he paints them so. Now Natural Philosopher thinks me fanciful, but pauses when he sees pink paths on the canvas! it is a kind of fact, you see—something to observe and analyze. I wrote my poem two years ago; last May, "Pink Paths" were exhibited at the Royal Academy; this June comes out the theory of the complementary colors; and how 'the qualities we call *red, green, &c.*, are truly a part of the mind, and no part of the object,' will duly appear next year, edited by Metaphysical Philosopher. Don't you believe my sylvan wanderings have done with the world just yet! A theory of complementary colors involves a *general principle*; it gets into religion and laws, *morals*, and, perhaps, the steam engine.

For it seems A's particular calling is a channel on his own domain, an ornamental rivulet, colored with red gravel, sure enough, but running to a common basin. Here it mixes with other waters; then runs up the channel of B; where now, observe, it is blueish in color by reason of certain clay in the neighborhood—but not ornamental as formerly—but helps to turn B's mills.

"I am thinking of a case of hydrophobia, which happened on my own domain; I took notes of the case in its progress, and they are scarcely interesting to you: but, just as it draws to its termination, the patient prophesies his death exactly within three minutes of its actual occurrence; and this, *twelve hours before!* The case is now in the *Common Basin*, interests you all—Artist, Lawyer, Man of the World; and I may read you a paper on the subject; but whether it shall hel to turn any of your mills, or render yet borders ornamental, must depend very much on yourselves.

"One thing, in conclusion, I cannot help observing; the extraordinary progress made by the ancients in Arts and Sciences: extraordinary, when we consider the comparative infancy of their world, and the limited means at its disposal: extraordinary when we contrast the eternal results, arrived at by Pythagoras, Euclid, Archimedes, Phidias, with the mutable results of the moderns—unaccountable, when we consider their want of our Christianity. And though I were loth to impose on you a dogma, and then build up a theory upon it, touching this imputed superiority of the ancients; I must (for want of time) assume your acquiescence, in the existence of a comparative, if not a real superiority, reminding you how, despite our Dantes, Shakespeares, and Brownings, Da Vincis, and Newtons, and Faradays, we have no epic poem nor sculptor, equal to Homer and Phidias; no instrument of logical mathematics as infallible as Euclid's Elements; for though our *facts* be tremendous, our *truths* are few and dubious, for facts beget new *facts*, but men must find out *truths*. I claim, then, for the ancients a more liberal analogy, a more logical, though less minute, analysis, a more universal invention, and a higher Abstract Ideal. Facts have outrun us, in truth; facts have reproduced facts, till they must lecture one another; they are more than we can govern or understand: they govern us.

'Things are in the saddle,
And ride mankind.'

So says the greatest analogist of our time—Emerson: and analogy, you will note, is the parent of all those intellectualities, which I ascribe in greater force to the ancients. Analogy is the key to the mystery; it is the substance of the abstract idea: this, then, brings us to the end. How was so extensive an *analogy* as that possessed by the ancients to be obtained? how but by an extensive inter-communication of various individual intellects? Now look to the history of ancient learning. The so-called philosophers were in immediate communication with poets, painters, sculptors, and musicians: but these philosophers were the concrete of all those various professorships, which in modern times are separate and distinct: hence, there was

inter-communication within inter-communication; a compound source of the Analogy in question, which the ancients naturally took refuge in, for lack of those very facts, and accumulated experiences, which so obviously characterize the moderns.

"We propose, then, as a remedy for this clogging plethora of facts, a fusion of knowledge and of thought; and the state in which the elements should be brought to the fire has been somewhat elaborately defined; partly from the fear of imposing a fetter, and partly from a conviction that, however liberally you may contribute these elements to our crucible, unaccompanied by their Flux, the abstract idea, they will never be capable of fusion.

"I thank you, gentlemen, for your patient attention, and wish the Society success."

THE REFLECTION IN VAN EYCK'S MIRROR.

June 26th, 1856.

In acknowledgment of a most noble and generous action, performed in a time of a great trouble; I dedicate this Tale, with the utmost gratitude and affection, to my dear J. Y.

Frederick G. Stephens.

ABOUT the year 1450, there lived at Venloo, in Limburg, a poor woman whose husband had been a carver in wood, much employed by the canons of Bruges. They, after his death, gave the widow a small office attached to the cathedral of the first named town; there she dwelt with her only child, a son, sickly and poor in constitution, slightly deformed in body, and in youth scarcely able to walk. The utmost eking out of the poor widow's means would not allow her to obtain for the boy, other education than was given in the school of the town, founded by the good Earl Peter of Flanders. This was in fact, more of a singing school than anything else; music was taught there, the art of playing on all instruments, the Viol, the Lute, the Regal and Rote—but principally such as were used in the services of the church; and the scholars mostly supplied the numerous choirs then abounding in the country.

Right proud were the burghers of Venloo of their famous singing school, and frequent were the visits they paid to hear the practice of the scholars, amongst whom the natural gifts of the widow's son early distinguished him. He gained notice from these burghers well to do in the world; they and their wives meeting the young Pierre in the streets, would search the almonières hanging at their girdles, for coin to give the poor boy in pity, as they saw him clutch the walls for support. The poverty of his mother hindered her from dressing him as every woman desires her child to be, even in preference to herself. Yet she loved him well; and the thoughts of the ladies, who, as I said before, would search their purses for coin, accounted for this when they reached and came to pass him, turning, though slightly: (as some did, the gentle ones, not wishing to pain even him; others do so boldly, enough conscious of the intention of charity).—I say that, when they came to see his face, they found it very tender and lovely; not wasted, though pale; with grey sad eyes, clear and